



THE LINCOLN FORUM BULLETIN

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LINCOLN FORUM XVIII TO FOCUS ON THE CIVIL WAR —AND THE CIVIL WAR PRESIDENT—AT MID-STREAM; “LINCOLN” SCREENWRITER TONY KUSHNER TO APPEAR

Acclaimed playwright and screenwriter Tony Kushner—whose magisterial script for Steven Spielberg’s film *Lincoln* earned several major awards, including a 2012 Oscar nomination—will lead an unprecedented array of presenters at the next Lincoln Forum.

The pivotal year of 1863—not only the midpoint of the American Civil War, but the year that witnessed such momentous events as emancipation, the largest battle in the history of the continent, the first recruitment of African American soldiers, the deadliest civilian riots of the century, and the greatest presidential speech of the entire conflict—will be the focus of the 18th annual symposium when it convenes at the Wyndham Gettysburg November 16-18, 2013. The meeting marks the fourth assembly in the Forum’s six-year-long concentration on the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

This year’s symposium will bring together some of the nation’s leading Lincoln and Civil War scholars for both solo presentations and group panels—and will feature two, two-time Lincoln Prize winners, along with a number of younger historians and first-time specialists in the Lincoln era who have made an immediate impact on the field.

“It is altogether fitting and proper that what is arguably the most important year of Lincoln’s presidency should bring together what may be the most extraordinary roster of historians the Forum has ever featured,” commented Frank J. Williams, Chairman of The Lincoln Forum. “The twelve months of 1863 brought the high water mark of the Confederacy, but also the high water mark of Abraham Lincoln’s leadership—on issues ranging from the constitutional to the military to the literary. It was the year the war for the Union also became a war for black freedom. It is the year Lincoln turned 272 words at Gettysburg into American gospel for all places and all time. All of us in the Forum leadership look forward with the keenest anticipation to creating an unforgettable symposium equal to these signal historic events.”

In addition to Pulitzer Prize winner Tony Kushner, whose *Lincoln* screenplay has been published in book form and who will speak about the filming of the movie on the symposium’s final evening, leading the 2013 roster will be James M. McPherson, whose two Lincoln Prizes and a Pulitzer Prize for *Battle Cry of Freedom* make him the most honored writer in the profession. Dr. McPherson, emeritus professor of history at Princeton, will open the symposium by addressing the eternal controversy about “Lincoln, Meade, and the Limits of the Possible at Gettysburg.”

City University of New York Professor James Oakes—who has just won his second Lincoln Prize for a timely, monumental study of abolition and emancipation, *Freedom National*, will speak on “The Emancipation Proclamation: Myths and Realities.” Harvard University professor John Stauffer, author of a widely acclaimed joint biography of Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, will address his forthcoming study of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Lincoln Forum Executive Committee member Edna Greene Medford, chair of the history department at Howard University, will deliver a paper on the “U.S. Colored Troops to the Rescue.” And Independent historian Barnet Schechter of New York City, whose book on the New York City Draft Riots (*The Devil’s Own Work*) remains the standard study of the uprising, will comment on those deadly urban disturbances on the occasion of their sesquicentennial.

The authors of two major new books that have earned critical praise and wide readership will be on hand as well to present lectures on their important and original

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Tony Kushner



James M. McPherson

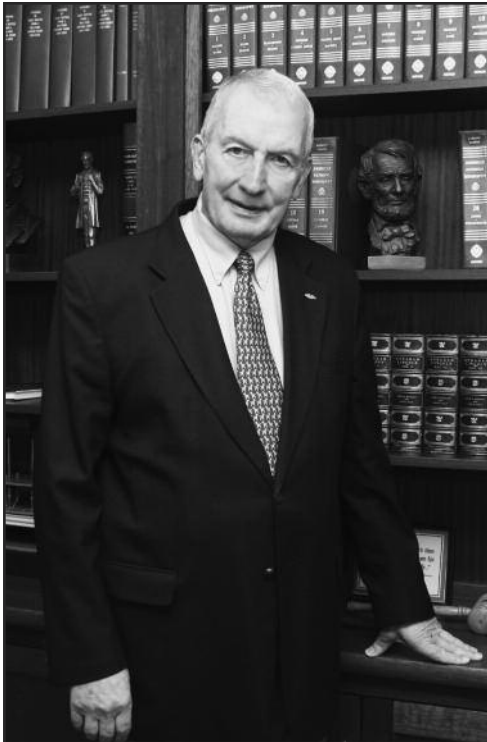


Edna Greene Medford



James Oakes

THE PRESIDENT AT MID-POINT



MESSAGE from the CHAIRMAN

In this season of all things Lincoln, his legacy hangs over all of us, more powerfully than ever. To free a people, to preserve the Union, “to bind up the nation’s wounds:” Lincoln’s presidency, at a moment of great moral, political, and military challenge for the country’s people and its leadership, continues to inspire us a century-and-a-half after his life ended. Steven Spielberg’s splendid film *Lincoln*, which follows his efforts to ensure passage of the 13th Amendment, making slavery unconstitutional, offers ample evidence of the 16th president’s ability to lead—and our capacity to remember and appreciate. Yet, his earlier experience in drafting and issuing the Emancipation Proclamation offers one of the best ways to appreciate his political courage. Emancipation was complicated. Fraught with legal, political and military challenges, with slavery protected by the Constitution, the President drafted the final proclamation as a military order authorized by the war powers of his office. It was immediate, without compensation to the slave owners, and without mention of colonization.

There have been many ways to think about Abraham Lincoln, our most enigmatic president, but the image of him as a film star is not the most obvious. We have “Honest Abe,” the great rail-splitter, Lincoln the political operative and architect of the Republican Party, and Lincoln the savvy wielder of executive power, as portrayed in the Spielberg film. Yet, where the pivotal year of 1863 is concerned, a number of scholars have put the issue of Lincoln’s language, rhetoric, and political thought front and center. Among them, Garry Wills’s *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Ronald C. White, Jr.’s *The Eloquent President: A Portrait of Lincoln Through His Words* and Gabor Boritt’s *The Gettysburg Gospel*, deserve mention as does Jared Peatman’s forthcoming volume, *The Long Shadow of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address*.

Lincoln as orator within the context of the 1863 military situation will be one of the subjects examined in depth at our forthcoming Forum XVIII—as will emancipation, military strategy, diplomacy, the contribution of African American soldiers, the importance of home front morale, and the constant challenges of keeping faith with the constitution in time of rebellion.

Abraham Lincoln’s example is rare. There is a problem in making Lincoln so singular that memory puts him outside of history. Those who invoke Lincoln’s legacy today tend to see him either as a Machiavellian wielder of political power or as a secular saint of modern democracies. As our 2013 presenters will no doubt demonstrate, each of these views is misleading. Lincoln reminds us that statecraft requires an attention to both principle and compromise—just as the Spielberg movie demonstrates. ■

Frank J. Williams
Chairman

INTRODUCING OUR NEW FORUM ADMINISTRATOR: NEW YORK’S (AND ADAMS COUNTY’S) OWN JERRY DESKO

To many Forum attendees, Jerry Desko is a longtime friend and veteran volunteer at the Lincoln Forum. This year, working with Betty Anselmo during the transition between Symposiums XVII and XVIII, Jerry assumes the role of Forum Administrator. To introduce him, we asked Jerry to do what Lincoln himself did in 1859 to widen his reach to new voters—write his autobiography. What follows is Jerry on Jerry—which we publish with our warm welcome to the Forum leadership family:

Jerry Desko was employed as a police officer for twenty-seven years by New York State. Upon his retirement in 2007, he left the Champlain Valley of New York’s Adirondack Region for the more temperate climate near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

He spends his free time studying and writing about history, especially military history. The Gettysburg National Military Park is only a few miles away from his home and it is the reason he and his wife Kathi moved to Adams County. They first visited Gettysburg in the early nineties and fell in love with the battlefield and the surrounding bucolic countryside. Kathi has a strong connection to the battlefield since one of her distant cousins was in the Fifth New Hampshire Infantry and survived the horrific bloodbath which occurred at the Wheatfield on the second day of the battle.

As a volunteer for the Adams County Historical Society, Jerry pens a monthly history column on their behalf which appears in the *Gettysburg Times* newspaper. He is currently researching several aspects of the battle of Gettysburg and hopes to have several articles published in the near future.



Jerry Desko (Henry F. Ballone)

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MONITORING THE FORUM: A LOOK AT THE 2012 SYMPOSIUM EVALUATIONS

Once again, attendees at the most recent Lincoln Forum have ranked the symposium highly and left ample comments testifying to the unique experience that our annual events offer. The 2012 speakers, accommodations, and meal service all earned high ratings, according to participant evaluations—with special praise going to this year’s musical interludes. (“Looking around while all were singing,” commented one attendee, “people seemed to love it.”)

“I am so happy that I came here,” wrote a registrant who traveled some 400 miles to attend the Forum. “The quality of the speakers, panel members, leadership, and fellow participants sets a high bar for my continuing quest to learn about and understand Lincoln.” Wrote another: “Thanks to Frank and Harold for all the effort to carry off every Forum! You guys are the very best in quality and family.”

“Met many nice people at the conference,” said a first-time attendee. Commented another first-timer: “I had no idea what to expect. The Forum has been a wonderful experience.” A veteran said: “My eighth Forum and they keep getting better. “Just plain great,” said another, while yet another seconded the emotion, urging: “Just continue the great job you are doing.”

One attendee offered a special shout-out to commend Forum volunteers, while another praised the session leaders who introduce the speakers. “I was very impressed with the student scholars,” commented another registrant,

No event is without problems, and no group of 300 people lacks for suggestions. Forum leadership is considering your most recent pleas: an improved sound system, a higher speakers’ platform, the possibility of staging more debates, presenting more music, and featuring more Lincoln enactments; also a few extra minutes to stretch during breaks, more and stronger reminders that audience members turn off all electronic devices, and healthy options like oatmeal for the new—and highly popular—group buffet breakfasts.

Of course it’s always hard to please everyone in so large a group. One attendee advised us that more humor would provide welcome relief to the long, serious presentations. But another countered: “The Lincoln Forum is not a 21st Century sitcom, and

the excessive reliance on humor is a distraction.” One member wrote to criticize the new “two-panels-per-Forum” schedule as “a waste of our precious time.” But another wrote: “Excellent interaction among panelists—truly cogent with shared discussions and well done.” Happy medium, anyone? Be assured that every member of the Forum executive committee is working to maintain the high standards the group has maintained for 17 years—and to make the 18th reunion better than ever.

After listening to Catherine Clinton and John Marszalek in 2012, an audience member acknowledged their high level of scholarship, musing: “I have now learned that what my junior high and elementary and high school teachers taught about Mary Todd Lincoln being a horrible wife and about General Grant being a drunk was not accurate. This underscores the importance of well-educated history teachers who can inform and excite the interests of their students.”

Perhaps no one offered a better acknowledgment of what the Forum attempts to provide than did the writer who declared: “To paraphrase Willie Nelson, my heroes have always been writers, so I am in scholarly heaven at the Lincoln Forum.” 📖



2012 Lincoln Forum Symposium (Henry F. Ballone)

INTRODUCING OUR NEW FORUM ADMINISTRATOR: NEW YORK’S (AND ADAMS COUNTY’S) OWN JERRY DESKO

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His interest in history extends from colonial America to the present. He has coauthored a lecture and tour regarding an often overlooked campaign of the American Revolution which is entitled, *Burning Valleys: The Sullivan Campaign Against the Iroquois*. His passion for this topic stems from the fact that he literally grew up on the banks of the Susquehanna River in upstate New York.

Jerry has ventured overseas twice, both on excursions concerning military history. In 2010 he traveled to Berlin, Germany on a tour regarding Battlefield Berlin which included an outing to the Oder River to view what remained of Field Marshal Zhukov’s bunker. In 2011 he visited the beaches of Normandy, several military cemeteries and the surrounding countryside. When asked about the trip to Normandy Jerry says, “Visiting the beaches of Normandy and

the American Cemetery and Memorial, should be on every American’s bucket list.”

Jerry’s interest in the Civil War and Lincoln began in 1990 with the airing of *The Civil War* by Ken Burns and was cemented in 1993 when the movie *Gettysburg* was released. That was just about the time he began building his personal military history library. Several years later as a history geek he was watching C-SPAN and viewed a taping of the Lincoln Forum. He joined the Forum in 1999 and is a life time member.

If you were to ask Jerry who was the greatest president of the United States, he would respond it would be a tossup between Abraham Lincoln and George Washington—unless of course you were using a Lincoln penny. 📖

DID LINCOLN VISIT THE GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD? AFTER 150 YEARS, NO DEFINITIVE ANSWER

Could even the perennially beleaguered, surprisingly indifferent tourist Abraham Lincoln have resisted the precious opportunity to personally inspect the most famous battlefield of the Civil War on the one and only occasion it was virtually at his doorstep? After a century-and-a-half, the question lingers—and remains frustratingly unanswered.

Two days before he was to deliver his “appropriate remarks” at the dedication of the new Gettysburg National Soldiers’ Cemetery, Lincoln had still not decided on his final itinerary. On November 17, 1863, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton proposed a number of alternatives, including the proposal that Lincoln depart for Pennsylvania at 6 AM on November 19, “arriving at Gettysburg at 12 noon, thus giving two hours to view the ground before the dedication ceremonies commence.” But Lincoln replied by scribbling on Stanton’s note: “I do not like this arrangement. I do not wish to so go that by the slightest accident we fail entirely, and, at the best, the whole to be a mere breathless running of the gauntlet.” So Stanton devised a plan that would bring Lincoln to the hallowed village the day before the ceremonies—ostensibly giving the President even more time to “view the ground,” if he chose.



Wills House (Henry F. Ballone)

Lincoln pulled into Gettysburg on schedule on November 18, strolled from the depot to the home of Judge David Wills on the town diamond, and later, from its doorstep, made what might be termed “a few inappropriate remarks” from its doorway in response to a serenade by the Fifth New York Artillery Band. “I have no speech to make,” he feebly protested. “In my position it is somewhat important that I should not say any foolish things”—to which, replied a voice in the crowd, “If you can help it.”

This is the part of the story on which historians concur. But between the evening of November 18 and the afternoon of November 19, no one seems to agree about what Lincoln did with himself, beyond closeting himself at the Wills House as long as possible and devoting all of his spare time to massaging his brief but crucial address. On the morning of the 19th, Lincoln had ample time to mount a horse and tour the battlefield. Stanton had implied in his original itinerary message that he expected the President indeed wanted to do so. But did he? We are not sure.

Lincoln’s private secretary John G. Nicolay, who accompanied him on the trip, remembered that after an early breakfast at Judge Wills’ table, Lincoln returned to his bedroom to



Gettysburg National Cemetery (Henry F. Ballone)

work further on his address. The President headed back downstairs at 10 AM, mounted the horse that was assigned to lead him on the official procession to the cemetery for the dedication ceremonies, and after a long one-hour delay, headed out to the site for his rendezvous with history. Earl Schenck Miers’ definitive *Lincoln Day by Day* made no mention of a pre-ceremony tour of the battlefield.

In his award-winning 1992 book *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, however, Garry Wills insisted: “Early in the morning, Lincoln and [Secretary of State William H.] Seward took a carriage ride to the battle sites.” The following year, Frank L. Klement wrote in his book, *The Gettysburg Soldiers’ Cemetery and Lincoln’s Address: Aspects and Angles*, agreed, adding that U. S. Marshall for the District of Columbia—and Lincoln’s friend and bodyguard—Ward Hill Lamon, had arrived at the Wills House on the morning of the 18th and there encouraged the President to inspect the historic site while he still had time (Lamon had enjoyed an extensive tour the day before). Klement wrote that Lincoln



Near The Eternal Peace Light Memorial (Henry F. Ballone)

“drove over to the area of the Lutheran church and seminary where the fighting had raged hottest on the first day of the three-day battle.” According to Lamon via Klement, Lincoln was back at the Wills House in plenty of time to dress for **continued on page 12**

THE LINCOLN FORUM XVII TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS: LINDA TOWNSEND AND CLARK ZIMMERMAN

By Ruth Squillace

The Lincoln Forum Teacher Scholarship recognizes excellence in history education and awards recipients with the rare opportunity to interface with the preeminent Civil War authorities of our day at the annual November conference. The scholarship recipients from Lincoln Forum XVII are two impressive and accomplished educators.

Linda Townsend has been teaching for over 20 years and currently practices her craft at Dana L. West High School in the Port Byron Central School District in the Finger Lakes Region of New York. Her current course load includes English 12, Civics, Academic Intervention and Support, Street Law, and Global Studies Regents review classes, in addition to working as an Adjunct Professor at Cayuga Community College.

No stranger to awards, Townsend, was the first and only NYS teacher to be presented with the Horace Mann Lincoln Presidential Fellowship to study at the Lincoln Presidential Museum. Additionally, she has participated in programming at Ford's Theatre and was awarded a Target Field Trip grant, which will allow her students the opportunity to view the NYS Civil War Flag exhibit in Albany this spring.

Of her experience at last November's Lincoln Forum, Townsend expressed, "The academic and professional camaraderie exhibited by each participant was exceptional, informative and stirred within me the desire to seek out more knowledge about President Lincoln and the personalities, both military and civilian, who were involved in the Civil War. The ability to network and communicate with other Lincoln scholars and interested parties was so precious...I was in a state of 'Lincoln Heaven' being in such a profound academic environment."

Since Townsend's scholarship, she has found herself reinvigorated and developing new and engaging curriculum for her students. Recently, she was notified that she was one of eight teachers in the country selected for inclusion in the Educators Idea Book for lessons she submitted, one of which deals with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

Clark Zimmerman is the Chairperson of the Hamburg Area High School Social Studies Department in Hamburg, Pennsylvania, where he also teaches American Civics, American History, and AP Comparative Government and Politics, in addition to coaching varsity golf and softball.

Shortly after serving in the United States Air Force, Zimmerman took a trip to Gettysburg, which proved fateful. Standing on Little Round Top, as a friend recounted the actions of Chamberlain's 20th Maine, he was struck by a powerful urge to teach history and subsequently, enrolled in Kutztown University. His Advisor, Civil War historian, Dr. David Valuska's passion would influence and encourage Zimmerman's own studies and enthusiasm for this era. "The Civil War is a romantic time in our history. The stories by the



Harold Holzer, Clark W. Zimmerman Jr., Linda Townsend, & Frank J. Williams (Henry F. Ballone)

men who fought in the war are written with such emotion and conviction, well, I just can't get enough."

A consummate professional, Zimmerman believes it imperative to continually immerse himself in scholarship, in order to improve his knowledge base and stimulate greater interest among his students for the content he so passionately teaches. He was most impressed by the opportunity to engage with "some of the best Lincoln scholars in the world today...From John Marszalek's lecture on Grant and Sherman to Craig Symonds' breakout session to John Waugh's lecture on Lincoln and McClellan's relationship, this Forum provided a treasure trove of content information that I am already sharing with my students." He also appreciated the vast array of literature and resources made available onsite to attendees and consequently, added 18 books to his home library by Forum's end.

As a content area leader in his district, Zimmerman has shared this experience with colleagues and encouraged other educators to look to The Lincoln Forum as a "valuable and educational experience" from which they can benefit. Always leading by example for students and staff alike, he will participate in a teacher workshop at Antietam this January and another one in Kentucky this summer, in addition to attending the Civil War Institute and the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. 📖

The Lincoln Forum Bulletin welcomes contributions from members and historians—articles and photos alike. Send to editor Harold Holzer at harold.holzer@metmuseum.org. The editor particularly thanks the contributors to the current issue.

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Catherine Clinton, Craig & Marylou Symonds



Frank J. Williams



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Amanda Foreman & Harold Holzer



Marty & Jane Waligorski



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David Von Drehle, Eric Foner, Edna Greene Medford, Harold Holzer, & Frank J. Williams

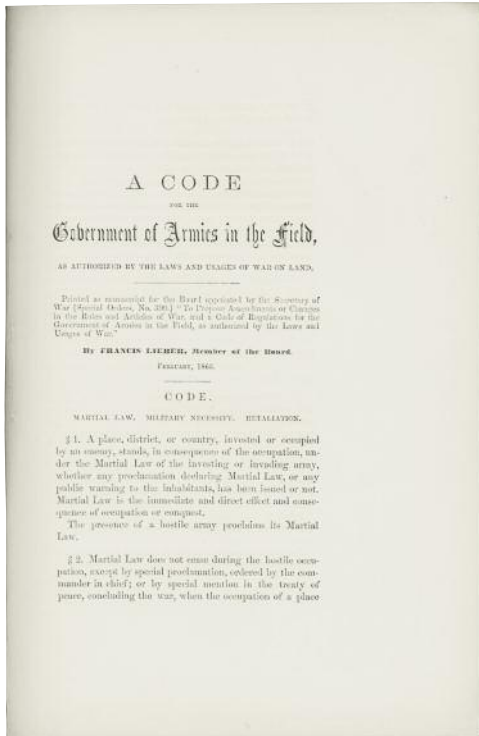


Photos by Dave Walker, Tim Branscum, Henry F. Ballone, & Joe Card

THE LONG SHADOW OF LIEBER'S CODE

By John Eliff

One hundred fifty years ago in April, President Lincoln made a decision with long lasting and widespread international influence. After “having been approved by the President of the United States,” the War Department issued General Orders No. 100, “Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field,” dated April 24, 1863. This General Order summarized the customary laws and usages of war on land accepted by most Western nations in the mid-nineteenth century, and was drafted principally by Dr. Francis Lieber of Columbia University in New York. The General Order is therefore commonly referred to as the “Lieber Code.”



The “Lieber Code”

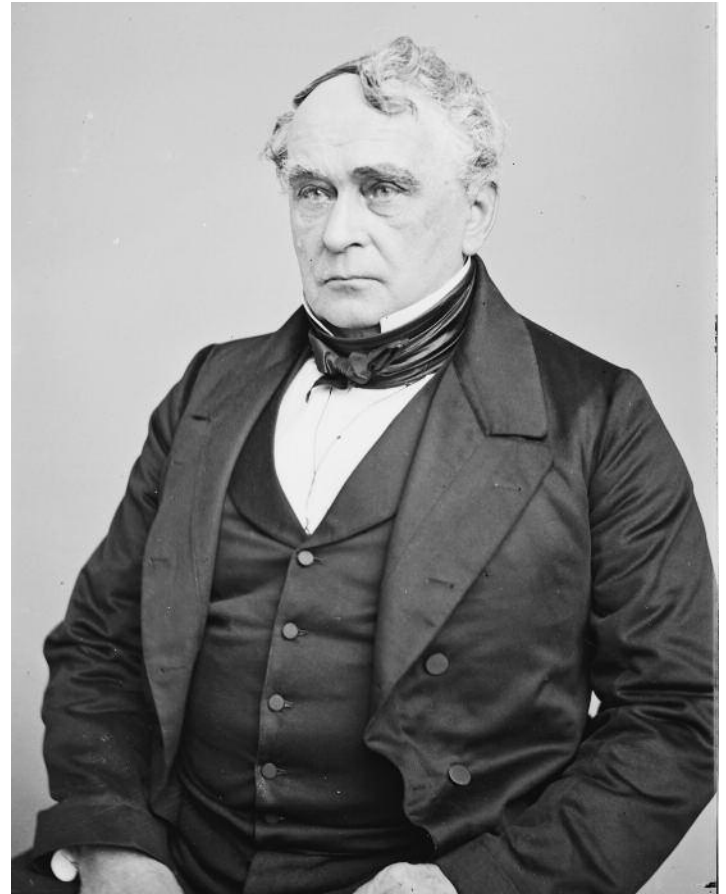
The War Department needed the Lieber Code due to the rapid expansion of the Union Army in the Civil War. In 1860, the U.S. Army had a little over 16,000 officers and men on its rolls. By the beginning of 1865, the Union had a million soldiers under arms, and another million had served in the army for some period of time. The vast majority of Union officers had been appointed directly from civilian life, and had no knowledge of the laws and customs of war. General Orders No. 100 was intended to provide guidance on those laws and customs to these officers and men. In 157 articles, the Lieber Code covered almost every legal issue likely to be faced by officers in the field, including distinguishing spies and guerrillas from legitimate combatants, treatment of prisoners of war, the proper use of a flag of truce, the conduct of sieges, and treatment of hostile civilians and their property. The Lieber Code stressed that hostilities should be carried out only for valid military reasons, and that acts of revenge, cruelty and torture were forbidden, values that President Lincoln shared and carried out in his own decisions.

Dr. Lieber was well suited to prepare a summary of the laws of war for the Army. As a teenager, he had served in the Prussian army during the last campaign of the Napoleonic Wars, and been badly wounded at the battle of Namur. Forced to flee Prussia due to political persecution, he had taught college in South Carolina despite his anti-slavery views, before becoming a professor at Columbia

College, soon to become Columbia University. Before being summoned to Washington in November 1861 to help draft General Orders No. 100, he had already been consulted on law of war issues by Attorney General Edward Bates, General in Chief Henry Halleck and Senator Charles Sumner.

The laws of war were of more than academic interest to Lieber due to his own combat experience and divisions in his own family over the Civil War. His oldest son died of wounds while serving in the Confederate Army. The other two sons joined the Union Army, where one was seriously wounded.

The Lieber Code remained the U.S. Army's standard guidance on the law of war for the next 50 years. Abroad, it had even greater influence. Many European nations adopted manuals on the laws and customs of war for their own armies, largely derived from the Lieber Code. When fifteen European countries met in Brussels, Belgium, in 1874 to adopt a treaty codifying the rules of law warfare, the draft they approved was also based directly on the Lieber Code. (The United States did not participate in the Brussels conference – we were still isolationists.) The Brussels declaration never formally entered into force as a treaty, but in turn it formed the basis of the Hague Conventions on Land Warfare of 1899 and 1907 (which the United States did ratify). The Hague Conventions were revised in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, enlarging on, and in some cases repealing, rules from the Lieber Code. Further revisions were developed in a diplomatic conference at Geneva from 1974 to 1977. The influence of the Lieber Code, approved by Lincoln in 1863, can thus be seen to this day in current treaties and in the military regulations and manuals of many nations, including the United States. 📌



Francis Lieber

LINCOLN'S HERALD: THEODORE PARKER

By Lawrence Weber

On May 29, 1850, Theodore Parker stood up in front of the New England Anti-slavery Convention and delivered what to the listeners that night could easily have been described as a sermon against the slave power everywhere in America. Just four months before the passage of the Compromise of 1850, a compromise that included concessions from northern politicians to the slaveholding South including the notorious Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Parker said:



Theodore Parker

for the purpose of giving every man an opportunity for the enjoyment and development of all these unalienable rights.”

“There is what I call the American idea. I so name it, because it seems to me to lie at the basis of all our truly original, distinctive and American institutions. It is itself a complex idea, composed of three subordinate and more simple ideas, namely: The idea that all men have unalienable rights; that in respect thereof, all men are created equal; and that government is to be established and sustained

Parker's reference to Jefferson's Declaration of Independence is unmistakable. All men have unalienable rights which come from God (for Jefferson, this was Nature's God, a statement fully in line with the rationalistic Enlightenment Deism that he often projected, and yet the label Deism was one he vehemently rejected). That among these rights is the right to life (all men are *created* equally), preeminent among all rights which come from God, because without life, all other rights become moot. The right to liberty, which Jefferson argued was consubstantial and equally preeminent with the equality of creation since “the God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time.” And, the right to pursue your own happiness, which according to Jefferson was the culmination of, and natural expression of, a person's freedom and the essential purpose of why governments exist. These were essential ideas for not only Jefferson, but for America during the Revolutionary Era, for Parker who considered his own time revolutionary, and for all of Americas posterity down to the latest generation.

That these truths were “self-evident” must have frustrated and angered an abolitionist like Parker who probably wondered why nearly seventy-four years after the writing of the Declaration of Independence, Americans were still arguing about its universal truths.

Parker then continued to address the convention with words that would come to have far-reaching implications. In summarizing Jefferson's three subordinate ideas contained within the Declaration of Independence with what he called the American Idea, Parker said, “This idea demands, as the proximate organization thereof, a democracy, that is, a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; of course, a government after the principles of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God; for

shortness' sake, I will call it the idea of Freedom.” Parker's definition of a democracy as a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people, is of course eventually found, subtly altered, within Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered in the autumn of 1863 at the dedication of the Soldier's National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

There is no doubt that Abraham Lincoln read and pondered the writings of Theodore Parker during his lifetime. William Herndon, Lincoln's law partner who was an ardent abolitionist, most likely introduced Lincoln to the writings of Parker during the tenuous days between the debates over the Kansas-Nebraska Act and its eventual passage in May of 1854. According to Lincoln biographer David Herbert Donald, “Herndon's antislavery connections enabled him to serve as a conduit between his partner and abolitionist leaders, who did not really know Lincoln.” These connections were invaluable to Lincoln and helped him gain a sense of credibility with prominent abolitionists who wielded political power.

As we approach the 150th Anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, it is more important than ever to reflect on its meaning both during the Civil War, and in our own time. Like any transcendent document, the ideas remain applicable from generation to generation. Lincoln, through the blood of the Union soldiers attempted to recreate America without the original sin of slavery, to give America a “new birth of freedom”. And, like Jefferson and Parker, who both understood that the purpose of government was to protect the people's basic unalienable rights, Lincoln's definition of government in the Gettysburg Address fully embraced both Parker and Jefferson's vision of the American Idea.

Abraham Lincoln believed in the American Idea. On February 22, 1861, Lincoln delivered an address in Philadelphia's Independence Hall saying:

I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. . . . It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in that Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it can't be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle—I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it.

Had Theodore Parker been alive to hear this speech, he may have realized in his own prophetic way that the heroic leader America needed had arrived, even if Lincoln was still progressing toward the side of God in terms of abolition in early 1861. The American Idea would live, Lincoln would be America's Moses, and Theodore Parker would be its antebellum herald. 📖

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HEARING THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE: LINCOLN'S MAILBAG IN 1863

Abraham Lincoln famously maintained his generous office hours for visitors, calling the experiences his “public opinion baths.” Less known to modern readers—but just as crucial to his understanding of what he often called “public sentiment”—were the views expressed to him in daily correspondence from ordinary Americans. Following is a sampling of letters to Lincoln from a century and a half ago: the spring of 1863.



March 20, 1863
To the President

I was appointed Quarter Master on the 17th of October 1861, and was with General Sherman's Expedition in South Carolina. I was rejected by the Senate on the 16th of Jan'y 1862, on mistaken grounds... For a period of seven months therefrom he [Secretary of War Stanton] has kept me idle on hotel expenses, awaiting his action on *your written order*, giving me from time to time such answers as would seem to preclude my right to leave the city... Now, Sir, I have no complaints to make, no harsh language to use, and had this been an ordinary application, I should have long since been attending to my own private affairs. But I was anxious to remove the stigma that attaches to the man who receives an adverse vote of the Senate...

William Lilley

[Ed. Note: Lincoln replied on April 2, “I have thought it a good rule, and have tried to act upon it, not to renominate any one whom the Senate has already rejected, unless I have evidence that the Senate would do differently on a second trial.” Two Senators then advised the President that their “nay” votes on Lilley had been based on erroneous evidence, and that they were now prepared to vote to approve his appointment. Within days, however, more of Lilley's war record came to light, including accusations of drunkenness and cruelty to African Americans, whereupon one of the senators changed his mind yet again and withdrew his pledge to reconsider the nomination for Quartermaster. Lilley was never reappointed.



April 7, 1863
Honored Sir,

Pardon the liberty I take in asking you to accept an Ebony Cane, which I send you by express, which in brought from the upper banks of the Gaboon [sic] River Equatorial Africa, where I have resided as a missionary during nearly twenty years... With heartfelt thanks for what you have done, & are doing, to suppress the Slave Trade, & with the assurance of the sympathy & prayers of all the missionaries in Africa, & those of thousands of native Christians in that dark land, I subscribe myself
Albert Bushnell



April 25, 1863
His Excellency the President

It would give me great pleasure to assure you of the *fine weather* suitable for a visit to the front or for starting an Expedition fraught with momentous interests to the Country, & not less

important—in its *economical* aspects, like the recent Cavalry movement. Please refer me, favorably, to the War Department. I will guarantee to furnish Metrological information that will *save* many a serious sacrifice.

F. L. Capen

[Ed. Note: A few days after Francis Capen wrote this letter and followed up with a visit to the White House, Washington was flooded by storms. Lincoln thereupon endorsed this job application as follows: “It seems to me Mr. Capen knows nothing about the weather, in advance. He told me three days ago that it would not rain again till the 30th of April or 1st of May. It is raining now & has been for ten hours—I can not spare any more time to Mr. Capen.”]



May 13, 1863
Mr. President

My movements have been a little delayed by the withdrawal of many of the two-years' and nine-months' regiments, and those whose time is not already up it will be expedient to leave on this side of the river. This reduction imposes upon me the necessity of partial reorganization. My marching force of infantry is cut down to about 80,000, while I have artillery for an army of more than double that number... I know that you are impatient, and I know that I am, but my impatience must not be indulged at the expense of dearest interests.

Joseph Hooker
Major General Commanding

[Ed. Note: Lincoln was not about to let this McClellanesque letter stand without a challenge of sorts. “It does not appear probable to me that you can gain any thing by an early renewal of the attempt to cross the Rappahannock,” he replied a few days later. “I therefore shall not complain, if you do no more, for a time, than to keep the enemy at bay, and out of other mischief, by menaces and occasional cavalry raids, if practicable; and to put your own army in good condition again. Still, if in your own clear judgment, you can renew the attack successfully, I do not mean to restrain you. Bearing upon this last point, I must tell you I have some painful intimations that some of your corps and Division Commanders are not giving you their entire confidence. This would be ruinous, if true; and you should therefore, first of all, ascertain the real facts beyond all possibility of doubt.” Hooker had just fought—and lost—the Battle of Chancellorsville. Within days, Lincoln replaced him with George Gordon Meade.



May 25, 1863
Mr. Lincoln.

It is unpleasant to me, to complain to me—I would not do it, only to justify and confirm what we have said. We protested against the appointment of Mr. [Ninian] Edwards [Lincoln's brother-in-law] as assistant Commissary: because of the influence of the men that had surrounded him for several years. All that we then predicted—and *more*—has, I think, proven true. Fortunes have undoubtedly been made, in an improper manner, I have no doubt myself, though I cannot prove it.

O[zias]. M. Hatch

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HEARING THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE: LINCOLN'S MAILBAG IN 1863

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[Ed. Note: On May 20, Lincoln asked his old political friend Hatch to send names of prospective appointees to replace his wife's sister's husband. "Edwards was transferred out of Springfield"]



June 15, 1863

My dear Sir,

I desire to thank you for your letter to Hon. Erastus Corning & others, it is of more value to the cause than a victory. You have not left them a single peg to hang on. There has at this time been ordered 50,000 copies of your letter in pamphlet form...and before the present week closes these will have been printed and circulated of this letter at least 500,000 copies and you may safely calculate that by the end of June this letter will have been read by 10,000,000 of people... . God bless you for this as for every other good thing you have done. Your friends here who are not office hunters will never cheat or betray you, on the contrary they will

stand by you to day & in 1864.

William A. Hall

[Ed. Note: Hall refers here to Lincoln's now famous reply to Erastus Corning, in response to resolutions enacted by Albany Democrats condemning the Lincoln Administration for violations of civil liberty in the arrest of "Copperhead" Clement L. Vallandigham.]



June 19, 1863

A Lincoln

Fremont and Freedom—Give us Fremont and Sigel [sic]—we can whip the devil.

Tewandah

[Ed. Note: Lincoln received more than his share of anonymous letters. His secretaries filed this one away with the many others.] 📧

LINCOLN FORUM XVIII TO FOCUS ON THE CIVIL WAR – AND THE CIVIL WAR PRESIDENT—AT MID-STREAM

continued from page 1 topics: Walter Stahr, on his book *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, and John Fabian Witt on his Bancroft Prize-winning study, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History*.

Rounding out the presentations will be an illustrated lecture on "Lincoln's Meade Letter and Other Treasures in the Library of Congress" by that institution's Lincoln and Civil War specialist Michelle Krowl, and performances of several iconic Lincoln classics of 1863—Lincoln's "two Gettysburg Addresses" (July and November) by the dean of Lincoln enactors James Getty; and Lincoln's Conkling Letter (prepared as a speech to his Springfield neighbors) by veteran Lincoln portrayer George Buss. Chairman Frank Williams, Vice Chairman Harold Holzer, and longtime Forum member Kenneth Childs will all serve as session moderators.

Once again, attendees will be treated to two provocative panel discussions. Chairman Williams will lead a group on "The North vs. the South and the East vs. the West: What Made the Big Difference in 1863?" The panel will feature Lincoln Forum favorites Craig Symonds and John Marszalek, whose many books include studies of figures like Joseph Johnston and William T. Sherman, respectively; along with the distinguished Civil War scholars William C. "Jack" Davis and, making his Forum debut, the leading historian of the western theater of the war, Richard McMurry.

Panels, Breakout Sessions, and Awards

Vice Chairman Holzer will moderate a panel exploring the topic of "Lincoln the Orator" featuring, among others, James McPherson, Vernon Burton (author of *The Age of Lincoln*) and Jared Peatman, author of a book on the public response to the Gettysburg Address. Young Dr. Peatman, a onetime pupil of Professor Gabor Boritt and the Civil War Institute at Gettysburg College, is making

his Lincoln Forum return: Jared was the Forum's first and only student speaker during his college days.

For the third consecutive year, the Forum will also offer small-group breakout sessions with distinguished historians. But for the first time, these sessions will focus on a single theme, and feature a special roster of principals: authors from the new "Concise Lincoln" series being published by Southern University Press (SIU editor Sylvia Frank Rodrigue will be among the interlocutors). The scholars include Brian Dirck (*Lincoln and the Constitution*), Kenneth J. Winkle (*Abraham and Mary Lincoln*), Richard Striner (*Lincoln and Race*), and Guy Fraker (*Lincoln's Ladder to the Presidency*). Along with Ms. Rodrigue, Harold Holzer, Craig Symonds, John Marszalek, and Thomas Horrocks of Brown University's John Hay Library will all serve as moderators to facilitate the discussions. Chairman Williams will concurrently offer another "Dining Inside the White House" demonstration with Wyndham Hotel executive chef Claude Rodier.

Once again, the Forum will be conveying its two prestigious annual awards: the 18th Richard Nelson Current Achievement Award (the first to be presented since the death at age 100 of the distinguished historian for whom it was named), and the Wendy Allen Award for notable accomplishments by a Lincoln or Civil War institution, this year to be presented by Lincoln Forum Treasurer Russell Weidman.

Finally, Don McCue, Director of the A. K. Smiley Library (which includes the Lincoln Shrine) in Redlands, California, will once again announce the annual Platt Family Essay Contest winner—but this year, for the first time, the honoree will be on hand to accept the recognition and offer an excerpt from the winning composition.

As is customary, the Forum will feature exhibitors, including book sellers, and a group book-signing event featuring all the historians attending the Forum. For information contact admin@thelincolnforum.org. 📧

DID LINCOLN VISIT THE GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD? AFTER 150 YEARS, NO DEFINITIVE ANSWER

continued from page 4 the scheduled 10 AM cemetery procession. By 2001 the story was being accepted in nearly all accounts of the Gettysburg Address. Kent Gramm, in his book *November: Lincoln's Elegy at Gettysburg*, concluded that "[s]omeone, perhaps Lamon, arranged for the president and secretary of state to be shown a portion of the battlefield," adding: "Lamon evidently had satisfied himself that the president's escort was sufficient, because he stayed behind." Yet even Lincoln thought Lamon a "monomaniac" on the subject of his safety; would he really have let the President out of his sight to make a battlefield tour in an open carriage while he stayed behind, even if he did have to make last-minute arrangements for the ceremonies for which he was scheduled to serve as master of ceremonies?

In his definitive *The Gettysburg Gospel*, Gabor Boritt agreed that "Lincoln had to see the grounds. Because the dedication would be on Cemetery Hill, with its great vista, the Seminary Ridge area was his destination now." But Boritt conceded: "What went on in his carriage ride no one knows." Boritt did add this gem: when he returned to the Wills House a journalist from the *Washington Daily Chronicle* heard him comment that he had "expected to see more woods."



Cannon on the Battlefield (Henry F. Ballone)

Yet questions remain. If the tour, however truncated by a poorly planned schedule, really occurred, why did not more journalists report on it? Why did neither Seward nor the loquacious Lamon ever mention it? And why would Lamon, who carried knives, pistols, and brass knuckles whenever he traveled with Lincoln, have let the President tool around a battlefield crowded with curious townspeople and unknown out-of-town tourists?



Battlefield View from Little Round Top (Henry F. Ballone)

We may never know for sure whether Abraham Lincoln ever really saw the historic sites he so brilliantly summoned for the American imagination—and cemented in its history—a few hours later on November 19, 1863.

But if the story rises or falls on the irresistible magnetism of the site itself—an allure Lincoln would never have resisted—think about this: in 1861, Abraham and Mary Lincoln took a steamship to Mount Vernon for what may have been the president's first opportunity at last to visit the home of America's first (and arguably his favorite) hero. When the boat docked, Mary enthusiastically toured the mansion, visited George and Martha Washington's graves, and purchased *carte-de-visite* photographs for her family album—the equivalent of today's souvenir postcards. But her husband? Abraham Lincoln remained on deck, perhaps attending, as always, to his oppressive pile of last-minute paperwork.

Lincoln was never really curious about historic sites—he was all but indifferent to places in history. Except, one might say, his own.

(Did Lincoln visit the battlefield before delivering the Gettysburg Address? What do you think? Please send your comments to the editor (haroldholzer@haroldholzer.com) and the Forum Bulletin will publish reader opinions in the November issue.) 📌

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